

TODD
MCFARLANE

SZYMON
KUDRANSKI

SPAWN





TODD McFARLANE
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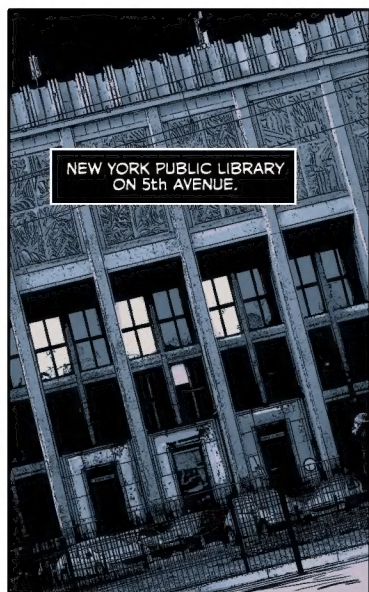
Publisher For Image Comics
ERIC STEPHENSON

SPAWN CREATED BY
TODD McFARLANE

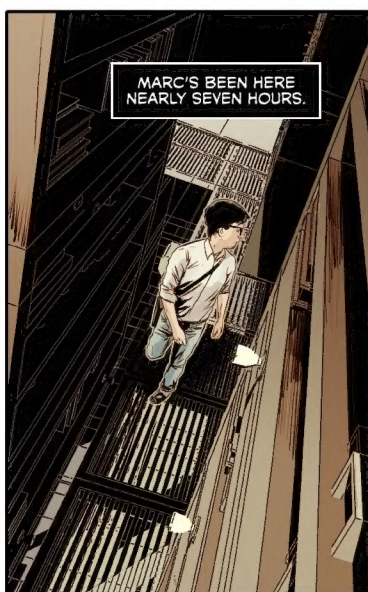


PREVIOUSLY IN SPAWN

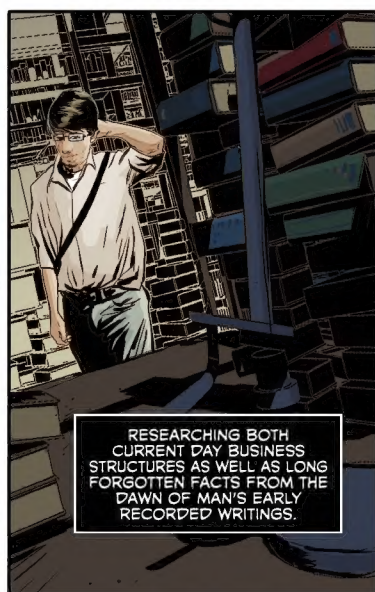
Spawn's army of former enemies continue to terrorize the city while Spawn advances his plan. He visits his old haunt in the alley and sits on his throne waiting for an 'old friend'. The Clown appears and they begin to fight. Quickly the Clown gives up, but his defeat is a ploy to place a magical skull on Spawn's face. Clown achieves his goal and proceeds to stab the seemingly stunned Spawn. But, what the Clown doesn't know is that Spawn is one step ahead of him.



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ON 5th AVENUE.



MARC'S BEEN HERE
NEARLY SEVEN HOURS.



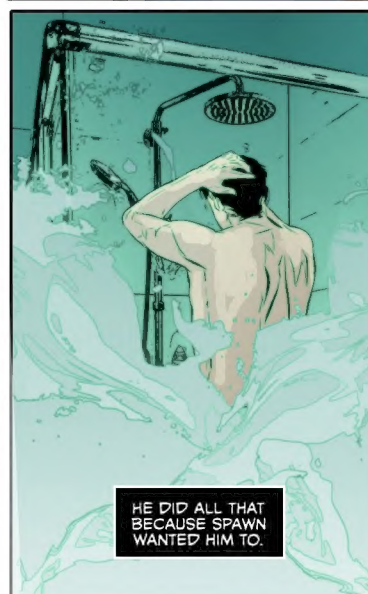
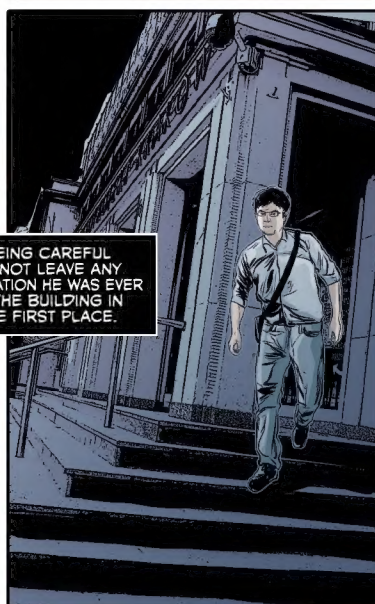
RESEARCHING BOTH
CURRENT DAY BUSINESS
STRUCTURES AS WELL AS LONG
FORGOTTEN FACTS FROM THE
DAWN OF MAN'S EARLY
RECORDED WRITINGS.



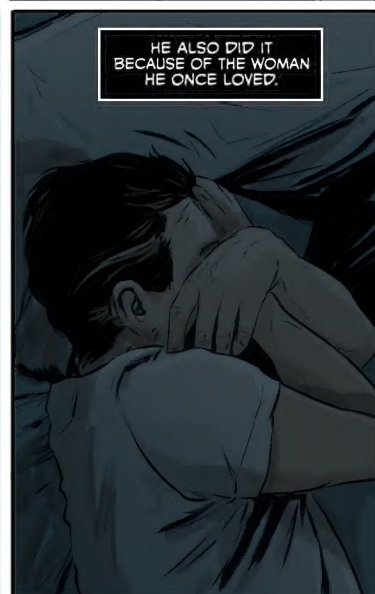
METICULOUSLY
TAKING NOTES...



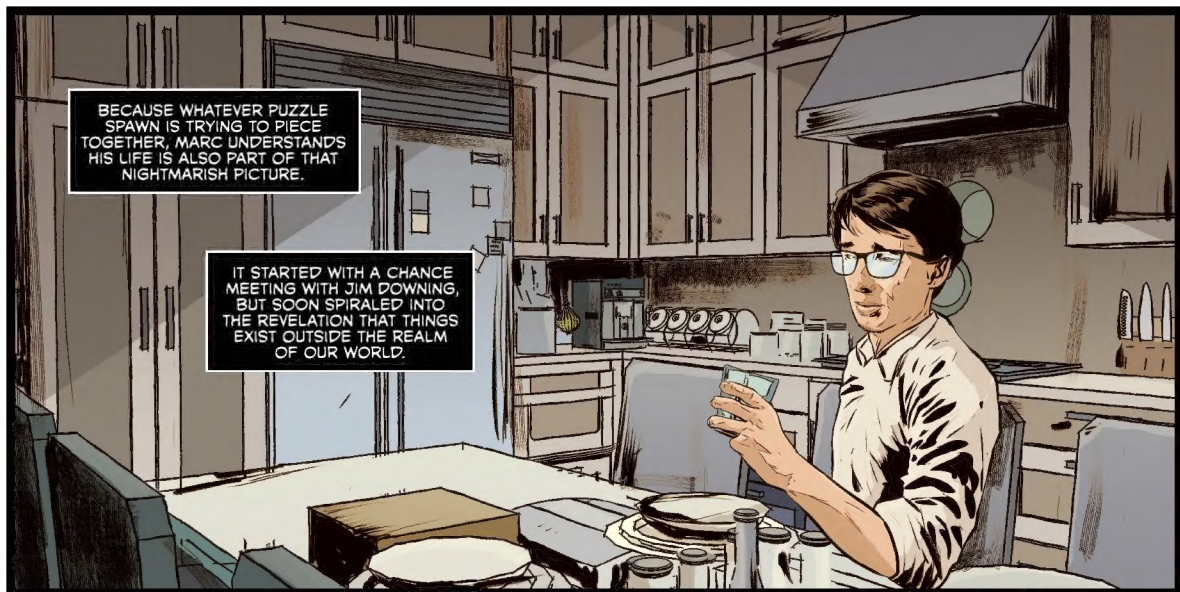
BEING CAREFUL
TO NOT LEAVE ANY
INDICATION HE WAS EVER
IN THE BUILDING IN
THE FIRST PLACE.



HE DID ALL THAT
BECAUSE SPAWN
WANTED HIM TO.



HE ALSO DID IT
BECAUSE OF THE WOMAN
HE ONCE LOVED.

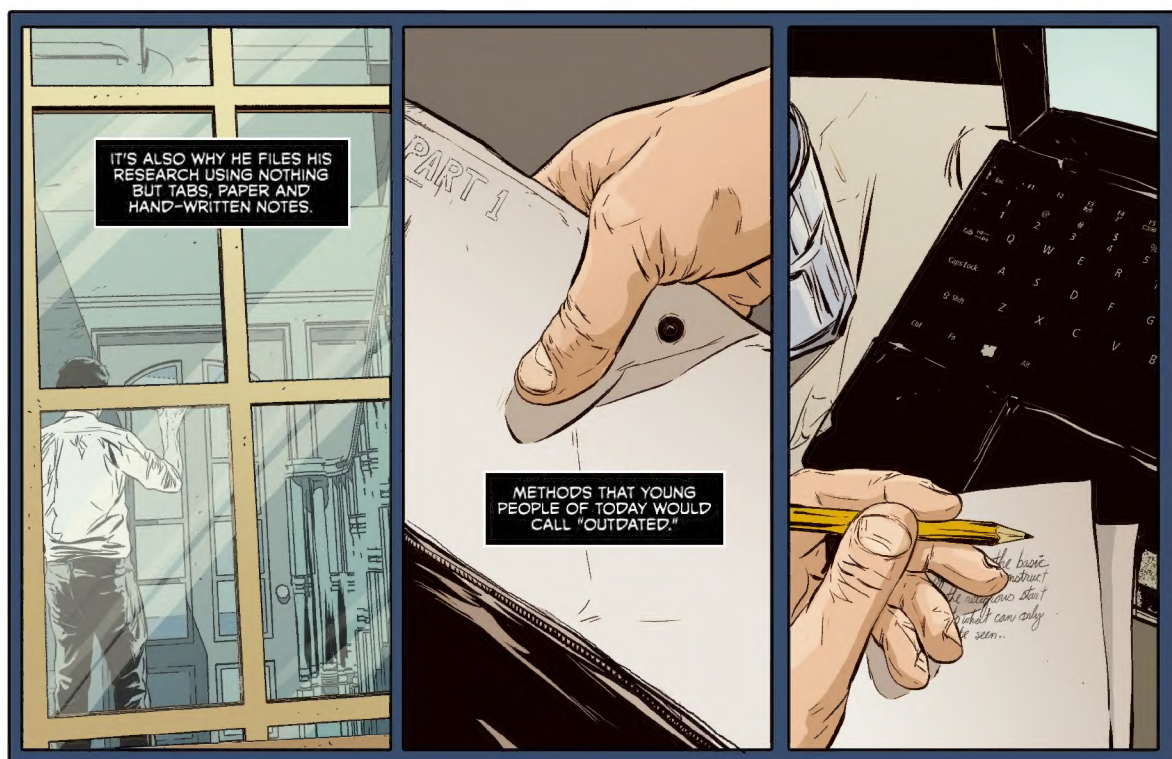


BECAUSE WHATEVER PUZZLE SPAWN IS TRYING TO PIECE TOGETHER, MARC UNDERSTANDS HIS LIFE IS ALSO PART OF THAT NIGHTMARISH PICTURE.

IT STARTED WITH A CHANCE MEETING WITH JIM DOWNING, BUT SOON SPIRALED INTO THE REVELATION THAT THINGS EXIST OUTSIDE THE REALM OF OUR WORLD.



'THINGS' THAT WON'T HESITATE TO KILL ANYTHING OR ANYONE IN THEIR PURSUIT TO CONTROL OUR SOULS.



IT'S ALSO WHY HE FILES HIS RESEARCH USING NOTHING BUT TABS, PAPER AND HAND-WRITTEN NOTES.

METHODS THAT YOUNG PEOPLE OF TODAY WOULD CALL "OUTDATED."

the brief instruction
the computer didn't
work so I can only
see...



BUT THOSE METHODS
SERVE A SPECIFIC
PURPOSE.



DO YOU
ALWAYS HAVE
TO BE SO
DRAMATIC?



DON'T
KNOW WHY
ELECTRICITY
REACTS TO
ME THAT
WAY.

I'M
NOT HERE
FOR SMALL TALK.
DID YOU FIND
WHAT I NEEDED
YOU TO?

IT'S IN
MY
REPORT.

AND
YOU STAYED
AWAY FROM THE
INTERNET?



I DID.
BUT IT WOULD'VE
BEEN FASTER IF
I HADN'T.



BUT YOU'D
HAVE LEFT A
'DIGITAL' TRAIL
BEHIND FOR THEM
TO FOLLOW. WE
CAN NOW MOVE
ON TO OUR
NEXT STEP.

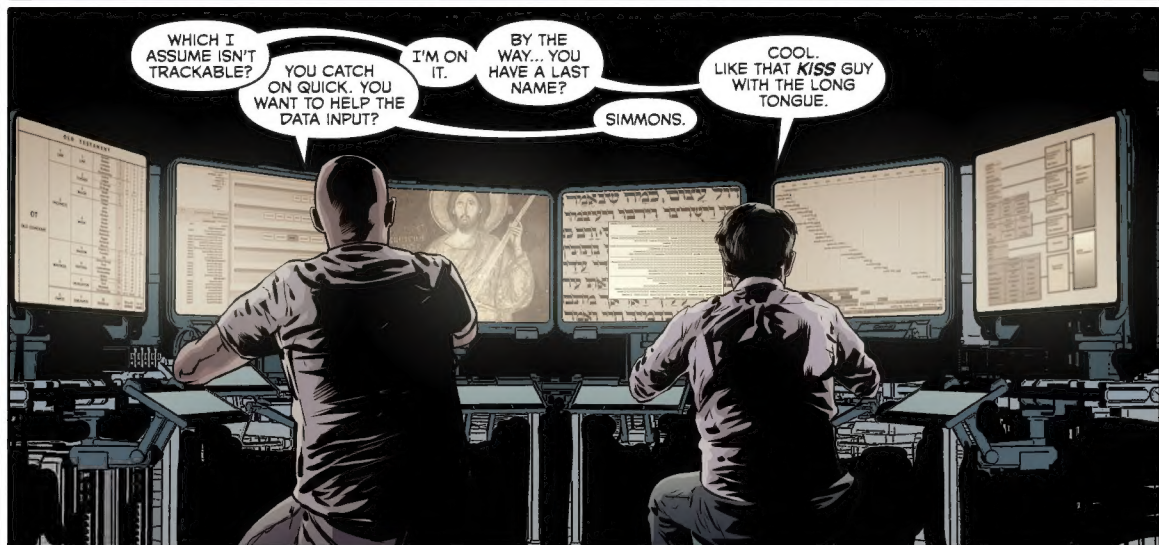
A SINGLE BEAT OF HIS HEART LATER, THEY'RE IN SPAWN'S HOUSE.

NOW I GET TO USE COMPUTERS?!

YES. BECAUSE YOURS ARE BUGGED AND USING ONE OUT THERE WILL TRIGGER A SIGNAL TO THEM.

BECAUSE OF THE TOPICS I SEARCHED?

EXACTLY. BUT NOW THAT WE HAVE SOME OF THE PRELIMINARY INFO NEEDED...



HOURLY AFTER HOURLY THEY STARED AT THEIR COMPUTER SCREENS, MAKING SURE THEY HADN'T MADE ANY TYPING ERRORS. BUT AT SOME POINT, EXHAUSTION SET IN FOR ONE OF THEM.

FOR THE OTHER... HIS BODY, LONG AGO, STOPPED NEEDING THE SAME RITUALS AS OTHER MEN.



INSTEAD, AL IS FOCUSED SOLELY ON THE TASK AT HAND. AND NOW HE'S GETS A HINT OF WHAT THAT WORK HAS BORN...



SHIT

WHAT IS IT? WHAT'S UP?

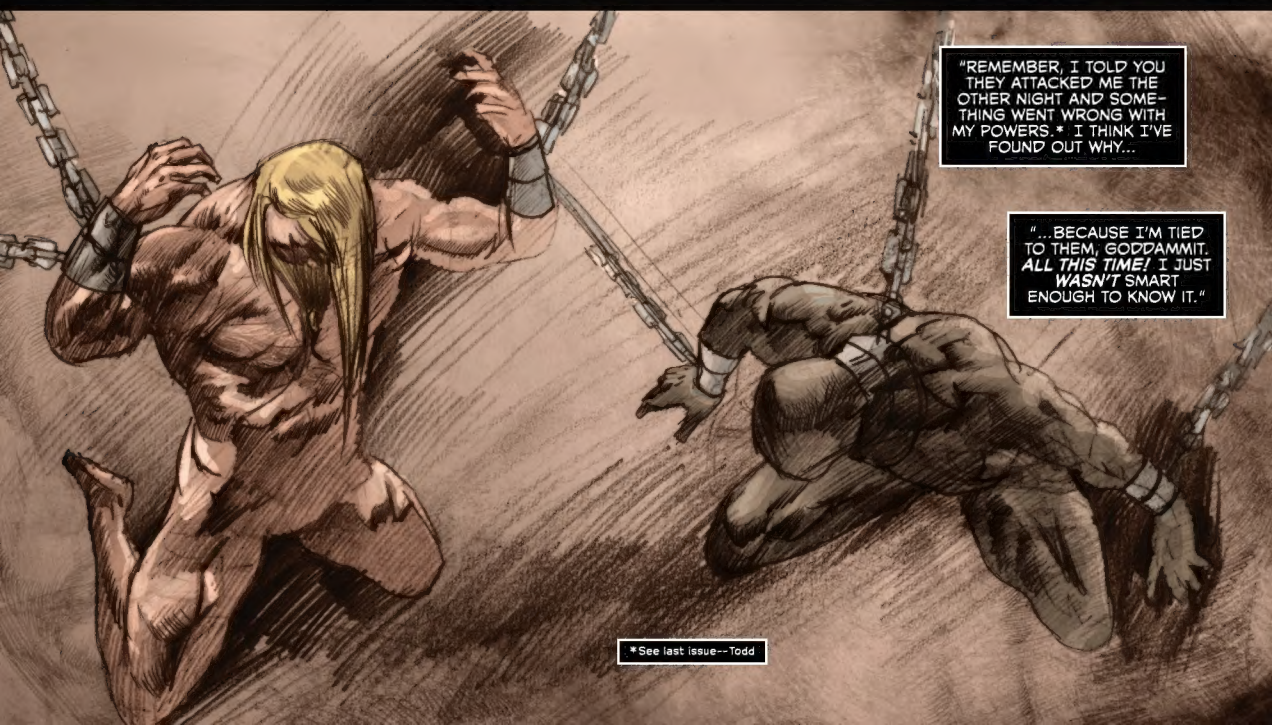


THEY FOUND MY 'ACHILLES HEEL.'



"REMEMBER, I TOLD YOU THEY ATTACKED ME THE OTHER NIGHT AND SOMETHING WENT WRONG WITH MY POWERS. * I THINK I'VE FOUND OUT WHY...

"...BECAUSE I'M TIED TO THEM, GODDAMMIT. ALL THIS TIME! I JUST WASN'T SMART ENOUGH TO KNOW IT."



*See last issue--Todd



"AL, YOU'RE NOT MAKING SENSE."



"THEN LET ME SPELL IT OUT FOR YOU. IT'S MY COSTUME! THERE'S A REASON FOR ITS COLORS AND THE SKULLS. DURING ONE OF HELL'S GREAT WARS, THERE WERE OPPOSING COMMANDERS. ONE BLACK, THE OTHER WHITE. THEY TOOK THEIR HEADS AND MOUNTED THEM ON PIKES FOR ALL OF HELL TO SEE--AS A SYMBOL THAT SATAN WAS ABOVE THEM ALL."

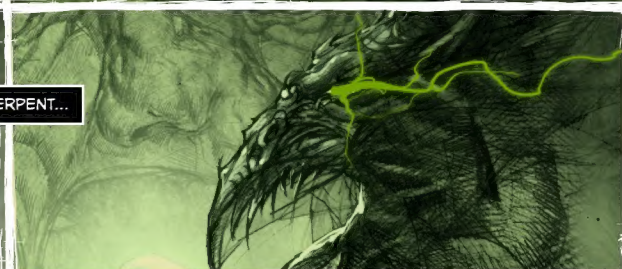
"BUT INSTEAD, IT LED TO AN EVEN GREATER BATTLE AS BOTH SIDES FOUGHT TO SEIZE POSSESSION OF THEIR ENEMY'S HEAD, AT THE SITE OF THE FIRST ARMAGEDDON."

"AND HEAVEN JUMPED INTO THE FRAY WILLINGLY, THINKING THEY COULD SWEEP IN AND TAKE OVER HELL."

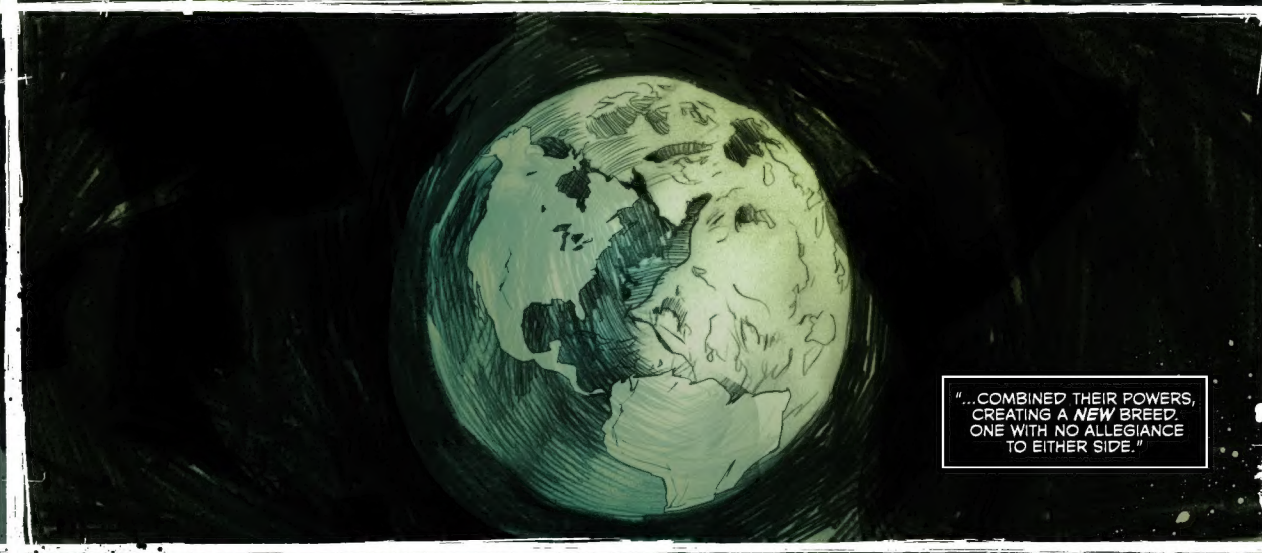
"BUT LIKE EVERY CREATURE EVER MADE, THE ANGELS AND DEMONS HAD ONE DRIVING DESIRE... AND THAT WAS SURVIVAL. AND THE ONLY WAY TO ATTAIN THAT WAS FOR THEM TO JOIN FORCES."



"THE SERPENT..."



"...AND THE ANGELIC DECEIVER..."



"...COMBINED THEIR POWERS, CREATING A NEW BREED, ONE WITH NO ALLEGIANCE TO EITHER SIDE."



SO, HOW DOES THAT AFFECT YOU?

EVEN IF IT'S TRUE-- EVERYTHING YOU'RE SAYING-- THAT WAS THOUSANDS OF YEARS AGO.

MORE THAN THAT.

WHenever it was, why don't any religious books make mention of this?

BECAUSE THOSE BOOKS ARE **ALL WRONG!** DON'T YOU GET IT? THEY LAID THE FRAMEWORK FOR EVERY RELIGION. EVERY HOLY BOOK. THEY INTENTIONALLY WROTE LIES IN EVERY ONE OF THEM. BUT INSTEAD OF QUESTIONING THOSE LIES, THE HUMAN RACE BEGAN TO EMBRACE THOSE LIES AS TRUTH UNTIL IT BECAME SO INGRAINED THAT WE DIDN'T EVEN NEED FACTS TO ACCEPT IT ANYMORE. THAT'S WHERE '**FAITH**' BECAME A WEAPON THEY COULD USE AGAINST US.

YOU'RE SAYING EVERY RELIGION HAS IT WRONG?

YES. THEY CREATED THOUSANDS OF RELIGIONS AS A DISTRACTION FROM THEIR TRUE PURPOSE.

AND WHAT DOES ALL THAT HAVE TO DO WITH YOU?



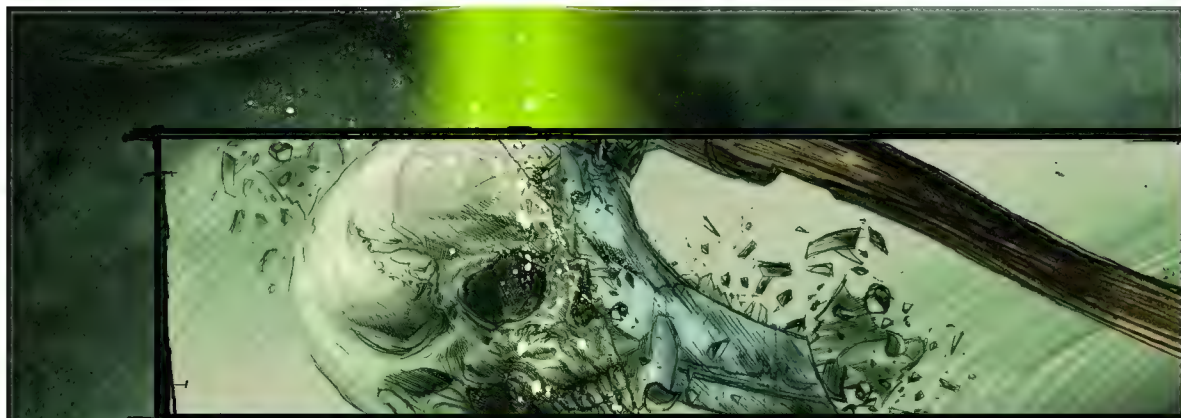
"BECAUSE I'M ONE OF THEM, OR AT LEAST PART OF ME IS. BECAUSE WHEN THEY COMBINED THEIR POWERS, THEY DESTROYED EVERYTHING IN THEIR PATH TO FINALLY GET THE TWO SKULLS."



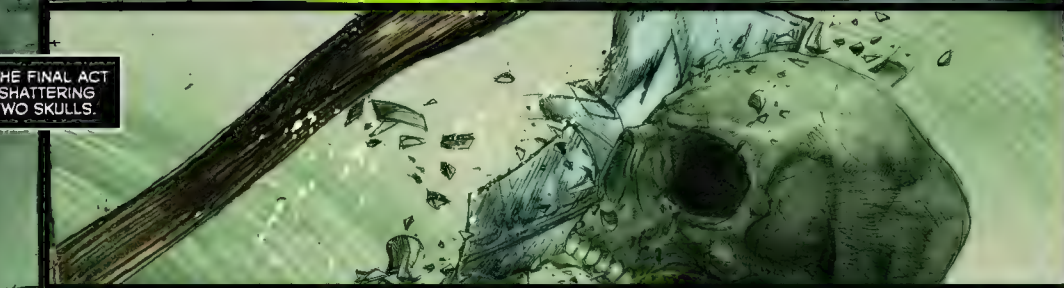


"AND WHEN THEY DID A NEW
CREATURE WAS BORN! ONE
FUSED FROM **BOTH** HEAVEN
AND HELL'S FURY! THEN THEY
NAMED IT... **IT WAS**

*the very
first*
Spawn!



"AND THE FINAL ACT
WAS SHATTERING
THE TWO SKULLS."



"THEN MERGING THE
POWER OF THE WHITE
DEMONS AND THE BLACK
ANGEL INTO SOMETHING
THAT WOULD LAST
FOREVER!"

"IN ESSENCE, THEY WERE
DESIGNING A WARRIOR OF
HELL THAT WOULD SOMEDAY
TAKE OVER THE MANTLE
FROM SATAN."

"AND AS WORD
SPREAD OF THIS NEW
BEING, IT BEGAN TO
SPLINTER THE HIERARCHY
OF POWER WITHIN BOTH
HEAVEN AND HELL. IT'S
ALSO WHERE A DEMON
CALLED MALEBOLGIA
STARTED HIS TRAITOROUS
ASCENT."

BUT
THAT'S
A STORY
FOR
ANOTHER
DAY.

AND
HOW
DO YOU
KNOW ALL
THIS?

BECAUSE
I'VE LEARNED THE
LESSONS OF THEIR RULES.
WHEN I WAS GONE AND
JIM DOWNING HAD SPAWN'S
POWERS, IT ALLOWED ME
TO STUDY WHO AND
WHAT THEY WERE.

SO, NOW
WHAT? HOW IS
ATTACKING THE
PRESIDENT AND
STARTING PRISON
RIOTS THE THING
TO DO?

BECAUSE
THEY'VE BEEN
HIDING FOR SO
LONG IT'S TIME TO
SHINE A LIGHT
ON THEM.

WON'T THEY
RETALIATE?

I'M HOPING
THEY DO. BECAUSE
FOR TOO LONG I'VE BEEN
TRYING TO STAY OUT OF THE
FRAY. NOT ANYMORE. BECAUSE
NOW I'M GOING TO HUNT THEM
INSTEAD OF THE OTHER
WAY AROUND.





YOU SAID
SOMETHING
ABOUT YOUR
'ACHILLES
HEEL.'

SORRY, I WAS
TRYING TO GIVE YOU
SOME BACKSTORY. HERE'S THE
THING... SOMEONE PUT A SKULL
ON MY BODY, AND WHEN THEY DID,
IT FELT LIKE MY POWERS WERE
GETTING SIPHONED, OR DRAINED.
SOMETHING BIG
WAS HAPPENING.



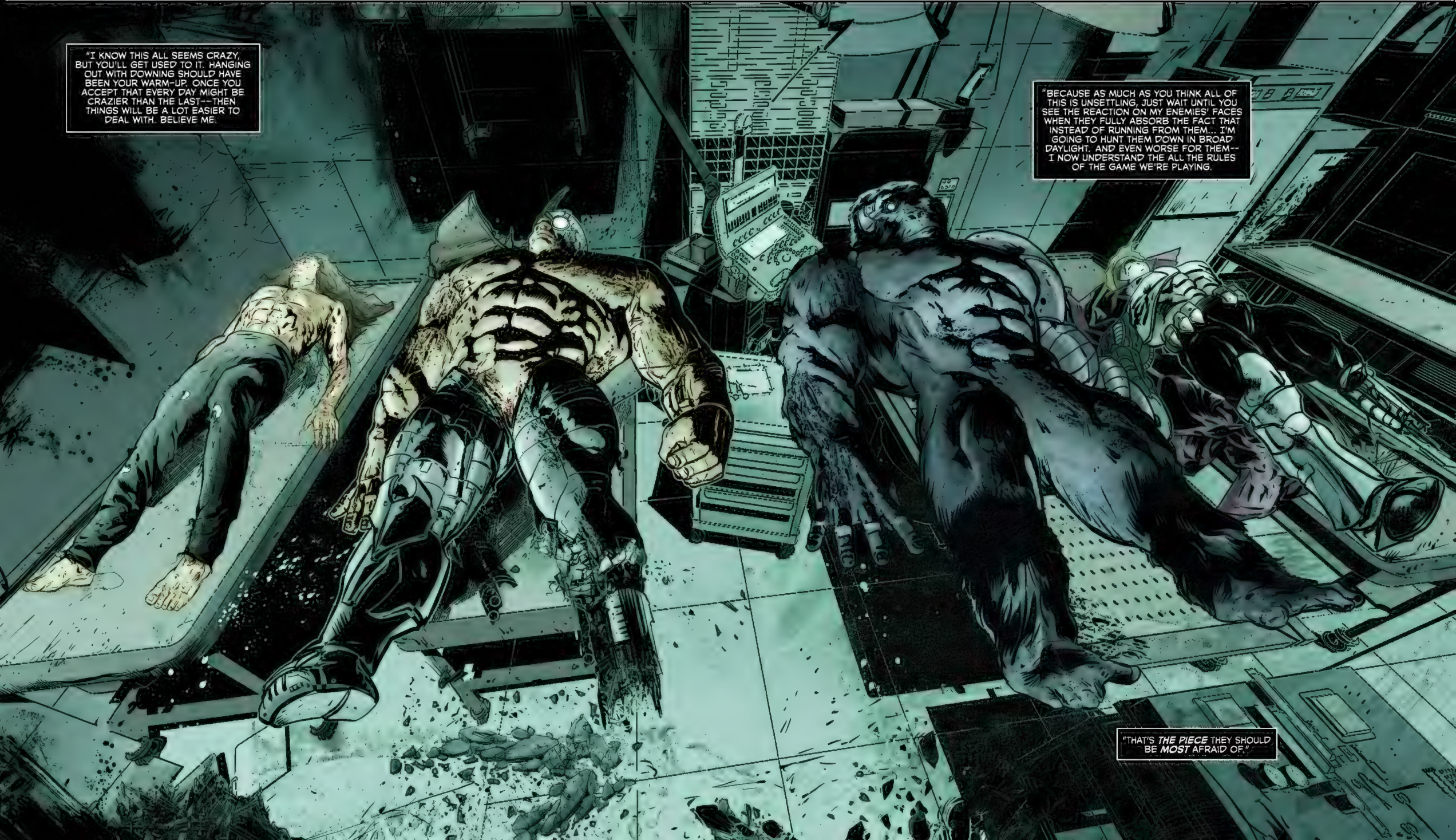
THE RESEARCH YOU
DID ALONG WITH ALL THE SHIT
IT TAKES TO BE SPAWN, TELLS
ME THAT A FRAGMENT OF THOSE
ORIGINAL SKULLS WAS PART OF
WHAT WAS TOUCHING ME. IF YOU
READ SUPERMAN COMICS,
THOSE FRAGMENTS ARE MY
'KRYPTONITE.'

AND I
DON'T KNOW
HOW MUCH
THEY HAVE
OF IT.



COME,
I WANT TO
SHOW YOU
SOMETHING.

NOT THE
BASEMENT
AGAIN.



"I KNOW THIS ALL SEEMS CRAZY,
BUT YOU'LL GET USED TO IT. HANGING
OUT WITH DOWNING SHOULD HAVE
BEEN YOUR WARM-UP. ONCE YOU
ACCEPT THAT EVERY DAY MIGHT BE
CRAZIER THAN THE LAST--THEN
THINGS WILL BE A LOT EASIER TO
DEAL WITH. BELIEVE ME.

"BECAUSE AS MUCH AS YOU THINK ALL OF
THIS IS UNSETTLING, JUST WAIT UNTIL YOU
SEE THE REACTION ON MY ENEMIES' FACES
WHEN THEY FULLY ABSORB THE FACT THAT
INSTEAD OF RUNNING FROM THEM... I'M
GOING TO HUNT THEM DOWN IN BROAD
DAYLIGHT. AND EVEN WORSE FOR THEM--
I NOW UNDERSTAND THE ALL THE RULES
OF THE GAME WE'RE PLAYING.

"THAT'S THE PIECE THEY SHOULD
BE MOST AFRAID OF."



CAN I ASK A DUMB QUESTION? WHY DIDN'T THEY JUST KILL YOU THE OTHER DAY INSTEAD OF MAKING YOU WEAK? OR AM I MISSING...

JESUS.

WHAT THE HELL IS THIS?!

WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE?

A KID... IN A GODDAMN CAGE! YOU'RE NOT SERIOUS, ARE YOU?

HELP ME... PLEASE. DON'T LET HIM HURT ME ANYMORE.




THIS IS CRAZY!

THEN LISTEN! AND LEARN! THIS LOOKS IRRATIONAL BECAUSE YOUR EYES ARE SHOWING YOU A LIE. A LIE THAT THAT EXISTS AMONG US EVERY SINGLE DAY. YOU'VE JUST BEEN IGNORING IT, LIKE I USED TO.

BUT IF YOU LOOK AT THEM CLOSER, IF YOU KNOW THEIR HABITS...





...YOU'LL
BE ABLE TO
TELL WHICH
ONES AREN'T
HUMAN.

BECAUSE IF
THEY CAN BLEND
IN, THEN THEY CAN
PURSUE THEIR
GOALS.



ISN'T
THAT RIGHT,
LITTLE
ONE?



GO AHEAD,
KILL ME! IT WON'T MATTER
BECAUSE THERE ARE
THOUSANDS OF US. WE'RE
EVERYWHERE.



HE TALKS?!
DO THEY ALL
DO THAT?

MOST
OF THEM. THE
DANGEROUS ONES DO,
THOUGH THEIR RANGE
OF INTELLIGENCE
VARIES.

ARE
YOU GOING
TO KILL
HIM?



I'D LIKE TO,
BUT I PROMISED
THAT IF HE GAVE ME THE
INFO I NEEDED HE'D
GO FREE.

WHAT?
WHY WOULD YOU
DO THAT?

I TOLD YOU,
HE GAVE ME WHAT
I WANTED. PLUS, THIS
ONE WORKS FOR
GIDEON.

THE GUY YOU
DRAGGED TO
THE WHITE HOUSE?*
WON'T THIS THING
JUST RUN BACK
TO HIM?

*See the last two issues -- Todd.



PROBABLY.
BUT I GAVE MY
WORD.

WOW!

YOU'RE IN THE MIDDLE
OF A WAR AND YOU'RE WORRIED
ABOUT ETHICS. HOW DO YOU
KNOW THAT 'THING' ISN'T THE
ONE THAT KILLED SUSAN? BUT
YOU'RE JUST GOING TO
LET HIM WALK?



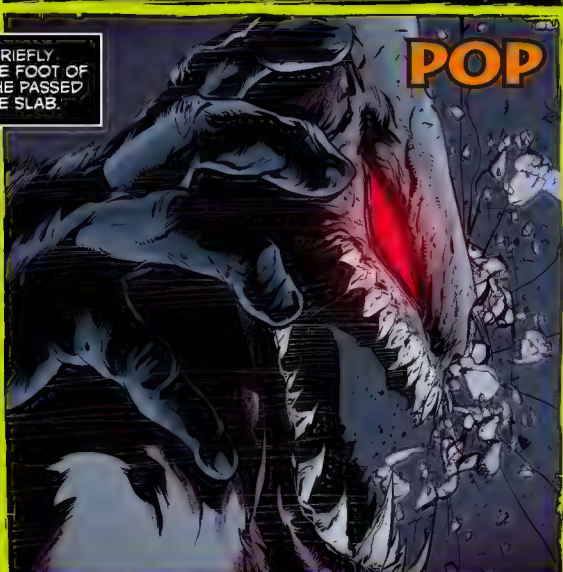
I DON'T HAVE A
CHOICE! MY COSTUME'S
TIED TO HEAVEN AND HELL,
WHICH MEANS IF I HURT ONE
OF THEIR SOLDIERS, AFTER
PROMISING NOT TO, THEY'LL
'SENSE' IT. AND MY POWER
WILL WEAKEN.

THEN
**DON'T
PROMISE!**





AL HAD BRIEFLY
'TOUCHED' THE FOOT OF
CY-GOR AS HE PASSED
HIM ON THE SLAB.



THAT 'TOUCH'
RE-ANIMATED THE
GREAT BEAST.





IT'S THE SAME PROCESS SPAWN'S BEEN USING FOR MONTHS WITH ALL THE BEINGS ON THE SLABS. ALL FOUR OF THEM, THOUGH FORMIDABLE TOGETHER ARE JUST THE 'TIP OF THE ICEBERG' IN SPAWN'S PLAN TO ELIMINATE ANYONE WHO ATTEMPTS TO SUBVERT THE WILL OF ANY INNOCENT PERSON.

SPAWN'S ARMY, IN THE NEAR FUTURE, WILL BE SOMETHING TO BEHOLD!

SNAPP





I THOUGHT YOU WEREN'T SUPPOSED TO TOUCH THAT THING?

I DIDN'T. CY-GOR DID. MY HANDS ARE CLEAN.

THIS IS MESSED UP.



I PROMISED I'D SET HIM FREE. I NEVER PROMISED HOW FAR HE'D GET.

BECAUSE RIGHT NOW, THEY'RE PLAYING BY THE OLD RULES. THINKING THEY'RE FIGHTING THE AL SIMMONS THEY KNEW. THAT MAN IS DEAD. I'M THE 'NEW' AL SIMMONS. THEY HAVE NO IDEA WHAT'S ABOUT TO HIT THEM. AND IT'LL MAKE EVERYTHING UP TO TODAY SEEM LIKE CHILD'S PLAY.



BUT THERE'S ONE THING LEFT I NEED TO DO.

I NEED YOU TO TAKE ME TO JIM DOWNING.

SHOULD I ASK?

TO BE CONTINUED...

SPAWNING GROUND

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twitter.com/Todd_McFarlane
Facebook.com/liketoddmcFarlane

MONTHLY CONTEST

WIN a 10 minute Skype call with Todd McFarlane and some COOL McFarlane toys and comics!

Each month readers will be giving a secret code word available ONLY in Spawning Ground.

Enter that code word HERE:
mcfarlane.com/spawningground for your chance to win awesome prizes!

Spawn issue #291 Code Word: **SKULLOFDOOM**
Winners will be notified by email two weeks after the release of the comic.

Good Luck!

Thank you, as always, for being loyal fans of Spawn!

Shannon Bailey
Publishing Coordinator



NEXT ISSUE

Spawn gets a new power. Soon to be a major motion picture from Blumhouse Productions, directed by Todd McFarlane, and starring Jamie Foxx as Spawn and Jeremy Renner as Twitch.



FROM THE
CO-CREATOR OF
THE WICKED +
THE DIVINE

D

GILLEN
HANS
COWLES

I

E™

WHEN
FANTASY
GETS REAL

DECEMBER
2018

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